

SPEECH  
BY  
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"William J. Donovan and the National Security"

It's a very great pleasure to be in Buffalo, and an honor to be asked to address your Bar Association on Bill Donovan's day.

It was my privilege to be associated with William J. Donovan both as a lawyer and then during World War II when I served under his command in the Office of Strategic Services. His courage and leadership qualities made a profound impression on me.

You are all familiar with the early career of this distinguished son of Buffalo's First Ward. Born here on New Year's Day, 1883, he attended St. Joseph's Institute and Niagara University, and then went on to New York City where he received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Columbia in 1905 and his law degree in 1907.

At Columbia, Donovan was a star quarterback on the football team. He often commented on his football experience as having set a pattern for him of keeping in top physical condition -- a pattern which he inspired in others.

After being admitted to the bar, Bill Donovan returned here in 1907 to practice law.

His interest in our national defense and security started early. In 1912 as the war clouds gathered in the Balkans, he helped organize Troop I of the New York National Guard. Shortly after this, in 1914, he married Ruth Rumsey, a Buffalo girl.

In 1915 he went to Poland as a member of a Rockefeller commission -- there being in that country a great shortage of food and particularly milk for the children. When the National Guard was mobilized in 1916, Bill resigned his war relief assignment and came home to join his Troop I on the Mexican Border.

Then came his fabulous career in World War I with the 165th Infantry of the 42nd Division -- the renowned "Fighting 69th" of the Rainbow Division. Here he received his nickname "Wild Bill." The legend goes that after the regiment landed in France he ran them five miles with full packs to limber them up. As the men were grumbling with exhaustion, Donovan pointed out that he was ten years older and carrying the same 50-pound pack. One of the men replied, "But we ain't as wild as you, Bill!" Another legend has it that Bill gained his honorary title from a professional baseball pitcher named Bill Donovan whose control left something to be desired. Whatever the origin, the title stuck.

The citations Colonel Donovan received in France tell the military story: On July 28, 1918, a Distinguished Service Cross. The citation reads, "He was in advance of the division for four days, all the while under shell and machine gun fire from the enemy, who were on three sides of him, and he was repeatedly and persistently counterattacked, being wounded twice."

Three days later, on July 31, the Distinguished Service Medal: The citation reads, "He displayed conspicuous energy and most efficient leadership in the advance of his battalion across the Ourcq River and the capture of strong enemy positions... His devotion to duty, heroism, and pronounced qualities of a Commander enabled him to successfully accomplish all missions assigned to him in this important operation."

And then, for action in combat in the Meuse-Argonne on October 14, the greatest of them all, the Congressional Medal of Honor. This citation reads, "...Colonel Donovan personally led the assaulting wave in an attack upon a very strongly organized position, and when our troops were suffering heavy casualties he encouraged all near him by his example, moving among his men in exposed positions, reorganizing decimated platoons and accompanying them forward in attacks. When he was wounded in the leg by a machine gun bullet, he refused to be evacuated and continued with his unit until it withdrew to a less exposed position."

General Douglas MacArthur who saw the action in which Donovan won the Medal of Honor said, "No man ever deserved it more."

Reverend Francis P. Duffy, the chaplain of the 69th, said, "His men would have cheerfully gone to hell with him, and as a priest, I mean what I say." Three aides were killed at Donovan's side in the course of these actions.

Last Thursday I read these pages to one of the most distinguished leaders of the Bar, and a former President of your Association, John Lord O'Brian. John remarked that several years ago General Frank McCoy described his close association with Bill Donovan during World War I. General McCoy said that Donovan was one of the finest soldiers he ever saw in his life-long service in the Army; that he had the qualities of the ideal soldier, judgment and courage and the respect and affection of his men.

Shortly after Donovan returned from the war, Niagara University awarded him an honorary law degree in 1919.

In 1922 he made his first venture into the political field, running for Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York. That same year Donovan was appointed U. S. Attorney in Buffalo.

Shortly thereafter he entered a new phase of his career. In 1924, President Coolidge reorganized the Department of Justice and called Bill to Washington to be assistant to the Attorney General, and to head the Antitrust Division. Here he showed both his fearless qualities in law enforcement and his intense interest in making law a practical vehicle to promote the economic welfare.

Donovan was firmly convinced that individual freedom was vitally linked to our system of free enterprise. He attacked restraints and monopoly with effective enthusiasm. In the Trenton Potteries case the Supreme Court agreed that price fixing among dominant competitors was illegal *per se*. Brought under legal attack were such diverse industries as oil, sugar, harvesting machinery, motion pictures, water transportation and labor unions. Yet he recognized that the uncertainties of our antitrust laws posed serious business problems. Accordingly, as head of the Antitrust Division, he instituted the practice of passing in advance upon the legality of proposed mergers and certain other business conduct which lay in the area of uncertain legality.

It is said that Bill had his heart set on being Attorney General, but that honor did not come to him. When President Hoover entered the White House in 1929, he offered Donovan the Governor Generalship of the Philippines, but Bill turned it down and went into law practice in New York City.

This brought him back to the State and he was shortly appointed Counsel to several of the New York Bar Associations in connection with a general overhauling of the bankruptcy laws. During this period he also served as Counsel to the Committee for the review of the laws governing the State's Public Service Commission. In 1932 he unsuccessfully ran for Governor of the State.

While in Washington he had gained valuable experience practicing before the Supreme Court of the United States. In 1935 as a corporation attorney he won the important Humphrey case which you will remember held that the President could not arbitrarily remove a chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

He also won an important decision in the Appalachian coal case, upholding the right of coal producers to organize a joint selling agency, as a measure of economic self-defense. This is still in existence.

During this period of corporate law practice, Bill never lost his interest in world affairs. He took time off to visit Ethiopia during the Italian invasion of that country in 1935. He was in Spain during the Civil War, carefully observing the Axis efforts to test their new equipment in these foreign adventures.

In the early days of World War II, Donovan was called into action by President Roosevelt. In 1940 he was sent on a fact-finding mission to England; in 1941 to the Balkans and the Middle East. Anthony Eden advised Washington that Colonel Donovan's confidential mission to the Balkans had been most helpful to the British in their assessment of the situation in the area.

From his earlier trip to Britain, not long after Dunkirk, Bill Donovan brought back to Washington a very important message about the British situation. You will recall that at that time there was skepticism

in some quarters in this country whether the British could effectively carry out Churchill's thrilling promise, "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

Donovan reported to Roosevelt that the British could, and that they would, do just that. This had a direct effect on American policy.

He also warned Harry Hopkins that the Germans might strike toward Suez through French North Africa -- a prophecy that soon became a reality.

Donovan also reported to the President that the United States should start preparing immediately for a global war. He particularly stressed the need of a service to wage unorthodox warfare and to gather information through every means available. Donovan discussed this idea at length with his close friends in the Cabinet, Secretaries Knox and Stimson, and with Attorney General Jackson.

The seeds which Bill planted bore fruit. In July 1941 the President established the Office of the Coordinator of Information and called Donovan to Washington to head it. The original concept of this organization was that it should combine information and intelligence programs with psychological and guerrilla warfare. This proved too big a morsel for one basket and in 1942 the organization was split. That portion of it dealing with wartime information services became the Office of War

Information, while the intelligence and unorthodox warfare work, where Bill's greatest interest lay, was put in the Office of Strategic Services.

Truly one of the remarkable accomplishments in World War II was the organization and activities of the O. S. S. -- a feat which would never have been achieved without Bill Donovan's leadership and his vast interest in the unorthodox, the novel and the dangerous.

Starting from scratch in 1941 Donovan built an organization of about 25 thousand that made a real contribution to the victory. Many of the deeds of O. S. S. will have to remain secret, but many with the passage of time can now be disclosed.

Bill Donovan conceived the O. S. S. as a world-wide intelligence organization that could collect the facts necessary to develop our policy and war strategy. He was convinced that the Axis secrets were to be found not only in Berlin, Rome and Tokyo, but in other capitals and outposts around the world. So he immediately set about dispatching officers to key spots in Europe, Asia, and later Africa. The pay-off justified the effort.

He was able to obtain information of great value from carefully established agents with contacts in Berlin, in the German High Command, and the Abwehr -- the secret German service. As the result of the work of his agents we were able to receive advance information about the development of German jet aircraft, about German work with heavy water in an effort to develop a nuclear weapon, about the V-1s and V-2s --

the "buzz bomb" and rocket with which they attacked England, and about the plot against Hitler.

Donovan knew that in addition to an organization for the collection of strategic intelligence there should be a counterpart to help gather tactical information in the combat areas. Here he set about having organized teams of parachutists--Americans as well as indigenous--to drop behind enemy lines.

In addition to both these types of intelligence, he also wanted action. He knew that well organized guerrillas operating behind enemy lines in areas where the local population was friendly could wreak havoc on enemy lines of communication and tie down troops that could otherwise be used in combat. Working with our allies, he built up teams of leaders and communicators to organize resistance in the Nazi Fascist and Japanese-occupied countries. There were also air drops of supplies and equipment, -- deep behind the Axis lines in France and Italy, in Burma and elsewhere.

Such "action" groups were well supported by a Headquarters technical group which was constantly at work under Bill Donovan's guiding hand in an imaginative fashion developing new ways to sabotage the enemy war effort and new gadgets either to harass the enemy or help our own cause. Illustrative of what this unusual part of the organization did was the development of equipment ranging from the most sophisticated

communications systems to a lotion that could be used as a shark repellent for personnel forced to bail out in shark-infested waters. Not all of the products were quite so practical.

Ambassador David Bruce, one of Bill Donovan's closest associates, in a recent tribute to the General's qualities of leadership, vividly described his excitement over ideas. Ambassador Bruce wrote, and I subscribe to every word of it, --

"His imagination was unlimited. Ideas were his plaything.

Excitement made him snort like a race horse. Woe to the officer who turned down a project because, on its face, it seemed ridiculous, or at least unusual. For painful weeks under his command I tested the possibility of using bats -- /they were to carry delayed action incendiary bombs/ -- taken from concentrations in Western caves, to destroy Tokyo. The General, backed by the intrigued President Roosevelt, was only dissuaded from further experiments in this field when it appeared probable that the cave bats would not survive a trans-Pacific flight at high altitudes."

Many ingenious ideas to work on the nerves of the enemy were born in another part of the O. S. S. - the Morale Operations Branch. This was the undercover psychological warfare branch of the war effort. While the Office of War Information was telling the enemy about the magnitude of the U. S. war effort and getting the facts and figures well circulated, this

branch of O. S. S. was dedicated to confusing the enemy and breaking their will to resist.

General Donovan was convinced that there were great untapped reservoirs of information in this country about foreign areas which had become of vital interest to the U. S. at war. These included information in the archives of business organizations, information acquired abroad by American scientists, academicians, and tourists and also that held by foreign experts residing here. He set about to collect this information and data and a mass of photographs of foreign areas. As the war extended on a global basis, this information became of great importance.

He also realized the importance of properly analyzing and presenting intelligence to the policy makers in readily useable form - one of the most difficult tasks in the intelligence field. To accomplish this, in the O. S. S., a very major branch was established for research and analysis. He assembled in Washington the best academic and analytical brains that he could beg, borrow or steal from the universities, laboratories, libraries, museums; from the business world and from other agencies of government. Theirs was the task of following the political and economic aspects of the war, as regards both our allies and our enemies, the neutrals and the occupied lands. Theirs also was the task of estimating Axis vulnerability and war potential and the staying power of the Russians who even then told us all but nothing about themselves.

Bill Donovan possessed the qualities of a great intelligence officer. He took nothing for granted and at the same time was insatiably curious. He had a good nose for the news and a faint whiff of something unusual would speed his mind into a dozen possible explanations. The explanations were generally as ingenious as the wiles of the enemy.

He wanted to see things on the spot and judge for himself. He was constantly on the move and drove his staff wild trying to keep him from going places they thought too exposed. He also kept them in a state of near exhaustion trying to keep up with the pace he set himself. One of his great qualities was his dedication to the men who served under him, and his ever readiness to give them his full support. He, in turn, had their complete loyalty, respect and affection. I vividly recall a personal instance.

For about two years from November 1942 to September 1944, I was working for Donovan in Switzerland which then was entirely encircled by the Nazi-Fascist forces. In September 1944, the American Seventh Army coming up from Southern France, broke through to the Swiss border near Geneva.

Under orders to return to Washington to report on my two years' stewardship, I had joined a group of the French Underground in a secret retreat in the Rhone Valley between Geneva and Lyon awaiting a clandestine flight to take me to London. As far as I knew, General Donovan was in

Washington, and, as far as I knew, he had not the slightest idea where I was hidden. Weather prevented my plane coming from London for several days and as I was waiting in my hideout, there was a knock on the door in the middle of the night. It was one of General Donovan's aides, telling me that the General himself was waiting for me at the nearest available airstrip south of Lyon which had just been evacuated by the Nazis. For some twenty-four hours, Bill Donovan, who had come from Washington, had been searching the area, had finally discovered where I was. Together we flew back to London, reunited after two years.

We arrived in London, as I remember well, on that day in September 1944 when the Germans launched the first of their ballistic missiles on the British capital. It descended near the center of London after a flight of nearly two hundred miles.

Both the American and the British intelligence services had been closely following the development of this missile. I have often wondered why, in this country, our technicians and strategists had failed to draw earlier the real implications of the success of the V-2, as I believe the Soviet did, and to realize, much earlier in the game, that the combination of the ballistic missile and the atomic bomb, which then was about to be unveiled, could change the nature of war and the security position of this country.

Few men of his time were more alert than Donovan to the new threats that might develop. In late 1944 he sent a man to Cairo to take over

the direction of activities at that post and gave him oral instructions to the effect that the main target for intelligence operations should now become discovering what the Soviets were doing in the Balkans rather than German activities in the Middle East. The German threat was receding. The Soviet danger was already looming. He realized this but, for obvious reasons, he could not put such instructions in an official dispatch.

Also, while the war was still in progress, General Donovan was looking forward to the peace. He foresaw the need for a permanent organization not only to collect intelligence, but, perhaps even more important, to coordinate the over-all intelligence effort of the government and to see that the President and the policy makers receive comprehensive and consolidated analyses on which to make decisions as to our course of action.

In the Fall of 1944, Donovan presented to the President a paper proposing a United States intelligence organization on a world-wide scale. This organization would be directly responsible to the President, and while it would not interfere with the responsibilities of the departmental intelligence services, particularly those of the armed forces, it would act as a coordinating mechanism. Donovan's paper stressed that his proposed organization would have no police or subpoena powers and would not operate in the United States.

President Roosevelt expressed considerable interest in General Donovan's proposal. In fact, just a week before his death in April 1945, the President asked Donovan to poll the Cabinet and the heads of the appropriate agencies for comment on his proposals. The replies make interesting reading today and range all the way from those who felt that such a peacetime organization was vital to national security to those who saw no need for it.

While Donovan received an Oak Leaf Cluster to his Distinguished Service Medal for his wartime work, he was not to realize his ambition to see the O. S. S. evolve into a peacetime intelligence organization immediately upon the cessation of hostilities.

His plan was beset with conflicting views: Some in our Government would have the new organization report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff -- as did O. S. S. during the war -- while others preferred it to be under the Department of State. And there was controversy as to whether one individual could or should be responsible for presenting a consolidated view of the intelligence picture to the policy makers, or whether this should be the collective responsibility of the chiefs of all the intelligence services.

In any event sometime after the war ended in August 1945, the O. S. S. was ordered disbanded.

A proposal for a central intelligence organization, such as Donovan had conceived, was contained in the first draft of the so-called unification

act submitted by Ferdinand Eberstadt to Secretary Forrestal in October 1945. And in January 1946 to preserve assets while the issue was determined, President Truman issued the order creating the Central Intelligence Group which later picked up some of the activities and personnel still remaining from O. S. S.

Bill Donovan's dream was yet not completely realized. Congress still had to act. After extensive hearings to which General Donovan contributed important testimony, the provisions for a Central Intelligence Agency were incorporated into the National Security Act of 1947, which created a Department of Defense and set up the National Security Council which is advisory to the President and to which the new Intelligence Agency was made responsible. In July 1947, final executive and legislative endorsement was given to the views which Donovan had been striving to have accepted. I have always felt that the decision to place the C. I. A. under the President as recommended by Donovan, was wise and necessary.

While Bill Donovan's restless energy had turned elsewhere with the disbanding of O. S. S., he never gave up his interest in the organization or stopped hammering home to the public the necessity for providing adequate and accurate information to the policy makers of the government in order to protect the national security.

Donovan's varied talents were being called on for other important services. His legal ability and vast knowledge of German wartime activities

were used in helping to prepare the Nuremburg trials for the Nazi war criminals.

He went to Greece to investigate the murder of newsman George Polk, a clear effort of the Communists to prevent the truth about the extent of their activities in the Greek civil war from seeping out.

The more General Donovan saw of the Soviets in action the more concerned he was with alerting the American people to the dangers. In the Yale Law Journal for July 1949 he was co-author of an article presenting a "Program for a Democratic Counter Attack to Communist Penetration of Government Service." The article said:

"The Communist Fifth Column... seeks to identify itself with every social grievance. Russian espionage and subversive operations are made up of trained and skilled spy technicians and intelligence officers, propaganda specialists, experts in spreading rumors. Instruction is planned so that the agent will find it as easy for a minority to operate a labor union, or a pacifist league, or any other such movement, as it is for a minority group to control a large corporation when most of the stockholders take no active interest in the management."

In 1950 President Eisenhower, then President of Columbia University, presided on the occasion of the award to Bill Donovan of the Alexander Hamilton Medal, which is awarded by the Columbia Alumni

Association for distinguished service and accomplishment in any of the great fields of human endeavor.

Donovan was soon to enter the fight against Communism in a new arena. In 1953 the President named this remarkable man of 70 to be United States Ambassador to Thailand. At the time this ancient kingdom of Siam was a main target for Communist subversion. With a vigor that belied his years, Bill Donovan threw himself into assisting the Thais in bolstering their defenses against the Communists so that this keystone of anti-Communism in Southeast Asia could continue free.

Upon his return to the United States one might have expected him to seek retirement, but nothing could have been further from his mind. He became National Chairman of the International Refugee Committee and the director of that group's fight against the Soviet program to induce Russians who escaped from Communism to return home. At the time of the Hungarian Revolution he threw his energies into aiding the refugees who were forced to flee after their unsuccessful effort to win freedom from Soviet tyranny.

From its inception in 1949, General Donovan had been Chairman of the American Committee on United Europe and through this organization he continued to further the efforts of our major allies in Western Europe to achieve a greater unity in face of the Communist danger.

Even after ill health forced General Donovan to retire to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, he continued his interest in the fight against Communism and the development of our intelligence work. In recognition of Donovan's role in the intelligence field, President Eisenhower in 1957 awarded him the National Security Medal. The citation reads:

"Through his foresight, wisdom, and experience, he foresaw, during the course of World War II, the problems which would face the postwar world and the urgent need for a permanent, centralized intelligence function. Thus his wartime work contributed to the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency and a coordinated national intelligence structure."

His dream of years had been achieved.

In February 1959 General Donovan passed away at Walter Reed hospital among the men he had led. As soldier, public prosecutor, leader of the bar, director of the Strategic Services in wartime, public servant in time of peace, he had left his record with the nation he served so well. He was a rare combination of physical courage, intellectual ability, and political acumen. He was a mild-mannered man, with an insatiable curiosity, an unflagging imagination, and the energy to turn his ideas into action.

The heritage of Bill Donovan is written in the national security. He awoke the American people to the need of a permanent peacetime intelligence service.

He bestirred Washington into creating a mechanism whereby all of the components of the government which receive information on what is going on anywhere in the world pool their knowledge, share their interpretations, and work together to make one unified estimate of what it means.

He helped place intelligence in its proper perspective and stimulated the policy makers to recognize its role in determining American policy abroad. He was one of the architects of an organization that should keep our government the best informed of any in the world.

History's epitaph for William J. Donovan of Buffalo, New York, will be: He made his nation more secure.

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